DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 953 CG 012 545

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TITLE Perceived Costs of Combining Career and Family Roles: The Influence of Early Family History on Adult Role Decisions.
PUB DATE 14 Jul 77
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Meeting of the Welsh Branch of British Psychological Society (July 14, 1977, Cardiff, Wales); not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Career Choice; Child Care; *Decision Making; *Educational Objectives; *Family Influence; Family Life; Females; Locus of Control; Research Projects; *Role Conflict; Sex Role; Working Women

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to clarify part of the decision-making process centering around combining family and career. There are two aspects of the study. In the first, perceived costs of combining roles are assessed and evaluated in light of mother's employment history. The subjects in this part of the study were 141 single women and 43 married women. In the second part, differences in attitudes of husbands and wives are considered. Subjects were recruited from three undergraduate psychology classes at an eastern state university and a church-related discussion group in the same community. All subjects were given both a demographic questionnaire and the Subjective Expected Utility scale for pursuing a career while the mother of young children. For much of the statistical analyses, a factor analytic approach was used to help summarize and describe the scores. The perceived costs of combining a career and motherhood may play a vital role in the individual's decision about her educational and vocational goals. There are several factors that may influence how the individual sees the effects of such role combination. These factors include her own marital and parental status and her experience of having been a child of a working (or nonworking) mother. (Author)

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PERCEIVED COSTS OF COMBINING CAREER AND FAMILY ROLES: THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY FAMILY HISTORY ON ADULT ROLE DECISIONS

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Paper presented at meeting
Welsh Branch of British Psychological Society
July 14, 1977
Cardiff, Wales

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Recent interest in the development of sex roles has examined the influence of maternal models on personality and career decisions (Hoffman, 1974; Almquist and Angrist, 1971) and on conceptions of appropriate sex-defined behaviors (Hartley, 1960, 1961; Lipman-Blumen, 1972. Altman, 1975). Changes in career options and perceived alternatives for women who are currently making career decisions have often focused on urging women to enter fields that are not traditionally feminine (such as medicine, law and natural science rather than elementary school teaching, nursing and secretarial work) and to plan careers, defining their lives more broadly than solely in terms of mother and wife. More women seem to be trying to expand role definitions, not choosing between family and career but trying to combine them successfully.

While previous research has considered career goals primarily in terms of a stated choice, there has been little study of what tradeoffs the young woman may think this choice involves. She may feel that a combined career and motherhood option is desirable but that the absence of a mother when children are young deprives them of important mothering. Research examining the effects of working mothers on delinquency, school achievement and general adjustment does not provide information on what aspects of the parenting role may be relevant to obtained differences between children of working and nonworking mothers. The present study attempts to clarify one aspect of the decision-making process based on the individual's perception of the tradeoffs she may need to make and of her personal family history.

There are two aspects of the present study. In the first, perceived costs of combining roles are assessed and evaluated in light of mother's employment history. The subjects in this part of the study are single and married women. In the second part, differences in attitudes of husbands and wives are considered. Because of time limitations, I will mention this only briefly today.

For all subjects, perceived cost and conflict are assessed by a test of

subjective expected utility (Mausner and Leotta, 1974). Various aspects of family history data (including maternal employment, parental attitudes and subject's relationship with her parents) were obtained through a questionnaire. Only part of this data will be discussed today.

Our hypotheses dealt with what issues would be most important to the subjects and with the perceived costs of combining career and family. Some of these were expected to be different for single and married subjects both because once one is in a situation, one may view it differently and because viewing things differently may help one to choose that situation.

Our predictions deal with four major areas:

1. quality of parenting care
2. importance of presenting a traditional female role
3. autonomy and personal development
4. threats to the marital relationship

1. No difference is predicted in values placed on aspects of child care. All subjects are expected to rank quality child care as very important although, how this is defined may differ slightly. Married subjects are expected to see a career as involving a greater cost to quality child care than are singles. Women who choose to be housewives are also expected to perceive a high cost in this area.

2. Single women are expected to be less concerned about presenting and fulfilling a traditional female role. Part of this prediction is based on age and on the fact that many of these subjects were students at a school with a somewhat feminist orientation. We expect them to show a somewhat more liberal view towards expanding roles for women.

3. Single women are expected to be more concerned with autonomy needs, valuing them more highly and seeing careers as helping to meet those needs more than will married women.
   a. Married women are expected to perceive a higher cost to leisure time when the woman pursues a career.

4. All subjects are expected to negatively value threats to the marriage. Married women are expected to see having a career as more threatening to the marriage.

Method

Subjects for the first part of the study were 184 women, 141 single women (four of whom were divorced) and 43 married women. All married women had at least one child. Median number of children was 2. Most of the single women were

between 19 and 22 of age (mostly 21 and 22) while the married women were predominantly over 23 (mostly between 23 and 30). Because of the confounding of age and marital status, some of the data from the two groups will be reported separately and possible sources of obtained differences will be noted.

Subjects were recruited from two main sources. Test materials were distributed to students in three undergraduate psychology classes at an eastern state university amd to members of a church-related discussion group in the same community. Of 202 questionnaires distributed, 190 were returned (a return rate of 94%). Six subjects were eliminated because of incomplete or invalid data. In the second part of the study, women in the discussion group and their husbands and both husbands and wives from a nondenominational discussion group served as subjects. An additional 14 female subjects were added here. For male subjects, 45 questionnaires were distributed of which 39 were returned (return rate 88%). Five of these were omitted from the study because of incomplete data and/or angry and invalidating responses.

All subjects were given the Subjective Expected Utility Scale (SEU) for pursuing a career while the mother of young children and a demographic questionnaire. Subjects were instructed to take the SEU first and were allowed to complete the forms at home, being instructed to do so without discussing their responses first. All questionnaires were returned to the experimenter. Participation was voluntary and all data was coded numerically to assure anonymity.

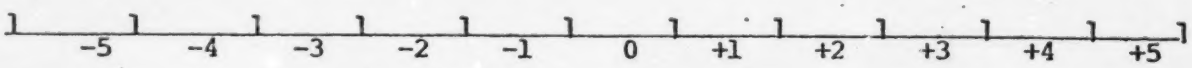
Table 1 shows a sample item from the SEU. Instructions for the test are included in the beginning of the test. For each item, the subject first indicates how important an issue is to her/him and then indicates the probability that the situation will occur if the woman has a career and then if she does not. For male subjects, the form was modified to relate to values and probabilities regarding their wife's having a career. Looking at the sample item makes this clearer. An item may have a highly positive ~~positive~~, highly negative or neutral value.

TABLE 1

SAMPLE SUBJECTIVE EXPECTED UTILITY (SEU) ITEM

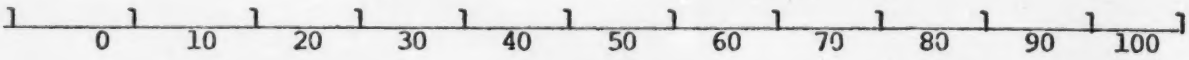
(From Mausner and Leotta, 1975)

How much do you care if you feel independent?



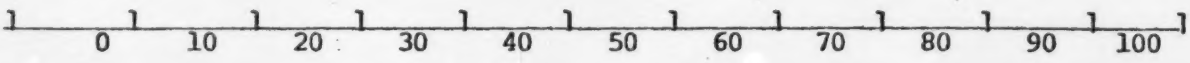
DON'T want it to happen Don't care DO want it to happen

If you DID pursue a career outside of your home, what are the chances that you would feel independent?



Chances in 100 that it would happen

If you DID NOT pursue a career outside of your home, what are the chances that you would feel independent?



Chances in 100 that it would happen

Based on the probability score, there may be an increased likelihood of a situation if the woman has a career (the probability is greater if she has a career than if she does not), a decreased likelihood (probability less if she does than if she does not), or no difference (probabilities about equal). The woman who wants to have a career will have a weighted value score (SEU) that is highly positive (she gains in an area important for her if she has a career) while the woman who prefers not to have a career may have a negative score (she loses in areas important to her if she has a career).

The scoring of the SEU follows from this logic. VALUE scores are those from the first part of the question; COST scores are the difference scores between the two probability estimates. The SEU or subjective expected utility score, is the product of these two indicating the perceived cost weighted by the subject's own values. There are 31 items on the test, each having these three parts. For much of the statistical analyses, a factor analytic approach was used to help summarize and describe the scores.

Results

The data will be reported in terms of the findings on the SEU for:

1. areas and issues rated as highly important to subjects
2. which involved the greatest cost when one combines roles
3. what are the primary factors involved and in what order do they emerge from the est data, and
4. how are these factors affected by the subject's family history considering her mother's employment history, that of her mother's and the child's peers, and the subject's own career goal.

Mean scores for each item in terms of its value and cost were obtained. There was a large range of scores indicating that the items measure different aspects of the effects of role combination. For many of the items, the variance was quite large suggesting that the group was not homogeneous in their responses to several issues.

The most highly valued items were those involving personal independence and feelings of worth (e.g. feeling independent, developing skills and abilities, having skills from which you can make money, meeting people with similar interests

and those involving care of children (e.g. having children feel wanted and loved, having consistent discipline, being able to watch child's day to day development, and being able to spend leisure time with children). The most negatively valued items dealt with having outside interests threaten marital stability, having others care for your child, having housework occassionally left undone and children left unsupervised.

Items for which there was the greatest gain when one had a career were primarily autonomy items (e.g. feeling independent, using education in a job, contributing to family finances, developing skills and abilities and meeting people with similar interests). Also increasing in probability were those items involving children and husband more in household duties and in helping with siblings (e.g. father available for emergencies, husband and children occassionally cook own meals and help with housework). Those items showing greatest loss when one has a career (higher probability when she does not) are those dealing with leisure time (e.g. time to develop hobbies and interests, maintaining contact with parents' of children's friends, participation in child-centered organizations) and in the child experiencing traditional parental roles (e.g. having a mother who cares for the home and a father who works).

Also of interest are those items for which there is minimal cost, incldуing children feeling loved, having consistent discipline and being relaxed when one's husband comes home from work (This last item may be one that is equally unlikely under either condition!)

To make the data more manageable, a rotated, orthogonal factor analysis was done using DATATEXT (armour and Couch, 1972). Three separate factor analyses were conducted, one for VALUE scores, one for COST scores and one for SEU scores. The obtained factors were in terms of z-scores. Actual raw scores were needed to enable a comparison of scores across factors (i.e. did subjects have higher scores for autonomy needs than for modelling traditional roles?) as well as across

subgroups (i.e. did married subjects view autonomy needs differently from single subjects?). Items correlating with the obtained factor at .40 or greater were included in a score for the factor. There are six factors for each of the three sets of scores. They are numbered according to the order in which they were calculated in the program.

Means and standard deviations for each of the factors for all subjects were calculated. Table 2 shows the factors (as they were labelled) in order of decreasing score. Thus, the factor dealing with Autonomy from VALUE scores had a higher mean value than did that for Traditional role, et cetera. ~~Items loading on each factor are found in Figure 1.~~

The subject population was subdivided based on several aspects of their personal history. Table 3 shows the number of subjects in the different categories for each subdivision. Means and standard deviations for the factors were obtained for divisions based on marital status, age, the age of the subject when her mother worked, working status of mother's friends and friends' mothers and the subject's career goal.

A comment about the marital status subdivision is in order. These two groups differed in several respects that may be relevant to the obtained findings. The married group was older than the single group. Only ten of the single subjects were over 22 while only two of the married subjects were under 23. Single subjects' parents had a higher mean educational level. Differences between the two groups may be confounded by these variables. In most cases, the present data do not allow us to determine which variable is more relevant.

There were several interrelationships found between divisions. Chi-square analyses indicated that women who worked tended to have friends who also worked ($\chi^2 = 28.47, p < .001$, df=6) and that subjects whose mother's friends worked had friends whose mothers worked ($\chi^2 = 93.53$, $p < .001$, df=4). Calculating the percentage of subjects in the single and married groups whose mothers worked showed few differences although more of the married subjects' mothers worked when the subject was

TABLE 2

FACTOR SCORES BASED ON SEU TEST

(Listed in order of decreasing score)

VALUE FACTORS

1.	Autonomy	(VF6)
2.	Traditional role, caretaking	(VF1)
3.	Parenting role, available to children	(VF2)
4.	Leisure for children	(VF4)
5.	Homemaking skills	(VF5)
6.	Negative effects on marriage	(VF3)

COST FACTORS

1.	Autonomy	(CF2)
2.	Own leisure needs	(CF5)
3.	Father's role	(CF6)
4.	Parenting contact and negative effects on marriage	(CF1)
5.	Modelling of traditional role	(CF4)
6.	Performing traditional female role (having children and husband help at home)	(CF3)

SUBJECTIVE EXPECTED UTILITY FACTORS

(Cost weighted by personal value)

1.	Autonomy	(SF2)
2.	Performing traditional female role	(SF6)
3.	Father's role	(SF3)
4.	Social functions in parenting	(SF4)
5.	Homemaking role	(SF5)
6.	Maternal role: responsiveness to child's needs	(SF1)

VALUE FACTORS

Autonomy VF6 (mean = 1.83)

4. use education in a job
15. develop intellectual abilities and skills
16. have skills from which you can make money
17. meet people with interests like your own
28. have interests that challenge your abilities

Traditional role: caretaking VF1 (mean = 1.47)

1. feel independent
3. children see you fulfilling a traditional role
7. children see mother at home, father who works
8. make contribution to family finances
10. have others assume care for your child
27. husband and children contribute to household duties
25. husband and children cook own meals
23. home when children return from school

Parenting role: available to children VF2 (mean = 1.42)

6. be relaxed when husband comes home
9. watch child's day to day development
13. be available during the day for emergencies
18. maintain social contact with parents of your child's friends
20. participate in child-centered organizations
24. have time to pursue homecrafts
14. father be available during the day for emergencies

Leisure for children VF4 (mean = .69)

2. children feel wanted and loved
11. have leisure time to devote to your children

Homemaking skills VF5 (mean = - 6.17)

12. have leisure to develop hobbies
21 housework occassionally left undone
31. son develop homemaking skills

Negative effects on marriage VF3 (mean = -.68)

19. husband feel threatened
22. children occassionally unsupervised
29. outside interests injure the stability of your marriage
26. others criticize your child-rearing methods

COST FACTORS

Autonomy CF2 (mean = 20.47)

1. feel independent
4. use education in a job
15. develop intellectual abilities and skills
16. have skills from which you can make money
17. meet people with interests like your own
28. have interests that challenge your abilities
30. daughter develop potential at expense of homemaking skills

Own leisure needs CF5 (mean = 6.71)

8. make contribution to family finances
12. have leisure to develop hobbies
13. be available during the day for emergencies

14. father be avilable during the day for emergencies
26. others criticize your child-rearing methods
29. outside interests injure the stability of your marriage

Parenting contact and negative effects on marriage CF1 (mean = -5.71)
2. children feel wanted and loved
6. be relaxed when husband comes home
9. watch child's day to day development
11. have leisure time to devote to your children
18. mainatin social contact with parents of your child's friends
19. husband feel threatened by your working
29. outside interests injure the stability of your marriage
5. children have consistent discipline
20. participate in child-centered organizations

Modelling of traditional role CF4 (mean = -8.58)
3. children see you fulfilling a traditional role
7. children see mother at home, a father who works
20. particpate in child-centered organizations
10. have others assume [illegible]re for your child

Traditional maternal role CF3 (mean = -9.07)
22. children occassionally unsupervised
25. husband and child cook own meals
26. others criticize your child-rearing methods
27. husband and children contribute to household duties
21. housework occassionally undone
23. home when children return from school

SEU FACTORS

Autonomy SF2 (mean = 71.68)
1. feel independent
4. use education in a job
15. develop intellectual abilities and skills
16. have skills from which you can make money
17. meet people with interests like your own
28. have interests that challenge your abilities

Performing traditional female role SF6 (mean = 24.21)
3. child sees you fulfilling a traditional role
7. children see mother at home, father whi works
25. hubsand and children cook own meals
27. husband and children contribute to household duties
30. daughter develop potential at the expense of homemaking skills
31. son develop homemaking skills

Father's role SF3 (mean = 4.42)
14. father be available during the day for emergencies
29. outside interests injure the stability of your marriage

Social functions in parenting SF4 (mean = 3.25)
18. maintain social contact with parents of your child's friends
20. participate in child-centered organizations
19. husband feel threatened
22. children occassionally unsupervised

Homemaking role SF5 (mean = 1.79)
21. housework occassionally undone
24. time to pursue homecrafts
26. others criticize your child-rearing methods

Burson (3)

Maternal role: responsiveness to child's needs and care SF1 (mean = -35.33)

2. children feel wanted and loved
5. children have consistent discipline
6. be relaxed when husband comes home
9. watch child's day to day development
11. have leisure time to devote to your children
12. have leisure to develop hobbies
13. be available during the day for emergencies
23. home when child returns from school
10. have others assume care for your child
20. participate in child-centered organizations

TABLE 3: Distribution of subjects based on family history variables

	Single	Married	Total
Number of subjects	141	43	184
Mean educational level (mother)	3.74	2.57	
Mean educational level (father)	4.22	2.52	
Mother's working status:			
less than 15	18	11	29
over 15	40	6	46
both	59	15	74
did not work	26	10	35
Mother's friends work history:			
yes	40	5	45
some	43	13	56
no	39	16	55
Friends' mother work history:			
yes	35	3	39
some	36	18	57
no	49	13	63
Career goal:			
nontraditional area	49	4	53
traditional area	32	11	43
traditional area at nontraditional level	8	2	10
housewife/marriage	13	13	26
none stated	39	1	40

under 15 and more of the single subjects' mothers worked when they were over 15, a finding that may be affected by social class. Approximately the same percentage had mothers who did not work (19% for singles, 23% for marrieds).

An examination of the occupations of subjects' mothers shows that 58%(n=107) were in traditional female occupations, 29% (n=54) were housewives, 5% (n=10) were in traditional occupations at nontraditional levels, and 4% (n=8) were in nontraditional occupations. A chi-square considering mother's occupation and daughter's career goal was not significant.

If we consider the career goals of the subjects themselves, we see that a higher proportion of the single women have career goals that are nontraditional (35% to 9%) but the two groups are about even for traditional careers, even to nontraditional levels (23 and 6% to 26 and 5%). Married women state being a housewife as a career goal more often than do singles (9% singles,39% marrieds). Over all career choices, single women stated career goals more often than did married women (63% v. 39%)

Analyses of variance were done on factor scores for the different subgroups to determine which of these divisions seems to affect attitudes about role combination. Table 4 shows the factors for which analyses revealed significant differences.(Corrections and additions to the Table - on slide- involve the groups based on Mother's Friends Work History. Father's role should be omitted and Leisure needs for COST and Maternal role for SEU should be added.)

Because the factors do not seem to measure a single area homogeneously (despite the fact that I have given them uniform-sounding names), we have decided to look at the data by grouping the factors into the main areas mentioned in the first part of the paper.

If we then consider the findings on Table 4, we can see that, for groups based on marital status and age, there is a difference in the importance of presentinga traditional role to the child but not for any other VALUE factors. Over all groups, there are few differences in VALUE scores.

TABLE 4

FACTORS SHOWING DIFFERENCES FOR SUBGROUPINGS

BASED ON PERSONAL HISTORY VARIABLES

	Marital Status	Age	Mother's Working History	Mother's Friends Work History	Friends' Mothers Work History	Career Goal
VALUE	Traditional role	Traditional role	Traditional role	Parenting role: available to child		
COST	Autonomy			Autonomy		Parenting contact and negative effects on marriage
	Own leisure needs	Own leisure needs	Own leisure needs	Own leisure needs		
	Father's role	Father's role	Father's role			Performing traditional female role
SEU	Maternal role: Responsiveness to child's needs	Maternal role: Responsiveness to Child's needs	Maternal role: Responsiveness to Child's needs	Maternal role: Responsiveness to Child's needs		Maternal role: Responsiveness to child's needs
	Father's role	Father's role	Father's role			Social functions in parenting
	Autonomy					

Over all groups, there are few differences between groups. Based on marital status, a difference in COST is perceived in autonomy and in leisure needs and an increased need for involvement of the father. When subjects are redivided by age, the results change only in the area of autonomy need. A similar pattern, also with the exception of autonomy needs, is found for women whose mothers worked. The largest difference (using a Scheffé test for anova results) in this group was between subjects whose mothers worked when they were under 15 and those whose mothers did not work.

When we consider the subject's own career goal, again we see no differences in values although differences do emerge in COST and SEU scores. Here, for the first time, they deal with child-rearing variables. Because of the very nature of this subdivision, we have accentuated any perceived differences between those women who choose to be housewives and those who may choose careers. The obtained difference here, while the analysis of variance is significant, is still not large.

No significant differences were found for subgroupings based on whether the subject's friends mothers worked. As indicated earlier, the main finding here suggests that mothers tended to have friends whose choices were like their own, namely to work while their children were young.

A comment about the couples' data will have to suffice at this time. Items most highly rated by women but not by their husbands include feeling independent, using one's education in a job, having skills from which to make money, meeting people with interests like your own. Those negatively valued by women but not men include having housework occassionally undone. Women perceived a greater cost in the area of independence and having others care for your child. Men saw the needs for husband and children helping with housework as more likely. In general, women felt a greater loss in their autonomy and independence while men saw the greater cost in availability of mother for emergencies.

Couples tended to show considerable agreement in responses. Where differences did exist, they seemed to be in items dealing with independence and autonomy and with leisure needs. Wives seemed more concerned with costs in their own leisure

while husbands perceived costs greater for leisure time for children.

Generally, women seemed to be more aware of and concerned with costs that would affect their leisure and independence and only affect their child-rearing in terms of social contacts with parents of children's friends and watching the child's development. Total SEU scores for women tended to be higher than those for men.

The primary findings of this study suggest that one's perceptions of the costs for combining career and family lie mainly in the areas of autonomy needs and a desire to fill a traditional female role. One's attitudes about the costs are affected by having been in the situation, either through having had a working mother or having children of one's own. The costs in terms of leisure time and the need for cooperation from one's spouse are confirmed through discussions with women who are, in fact, trying to combine the two roles.

The prediction regarding quality of child care was supported. Subjects do not differ significantly in their views about the importance of child care. It is interesting that having a career is not seen as more detrimental to the quality of desired care for most of the groups compared. In the one subdivision where such a difference is seen, the difference is not very large and may reflect some justification with one's life decisions. The SEU factor involving child care that does seem to differentiate between subgroups includes many items and is not uniformly dealing with child care. Several of the items involve the opportunity of the mother to experience her child in terms of seeing his/her daily development, having leisure for the children and participating in social functions related to parenting.

The predictions about the need to fulfill a traditional female role as more important for married and single women and for older rather than younger subjects was supported. As noted above, this may be the result of exposure to feminist ideals or to a difference in beliefs that may then influence one's behavior.

While we had expected a difference in the way single and married women viewed autonomy and personal development on all factors, differences were obtained only for COST and SEU factors. This suggests that married and single women do not value these needs differently but see a career as affecting them differently. Perhaps the married women in our sample have developed means of achieving these needs in other ways and so do not see a career as important to fulfilling them as do singles.

The fourth area, threats to the marriage did not significantly differ between the groups. The aspect of the marital relationship that did seem to be relevant was that involving father's participation in childrearing and household care.

In the next phases of this research, we are going to look more closely at the subject's history in terms of how both her mother and father viewed the mother's employment and how the subject views her relationship with her parents. We will also regroup the factors, perhaps on a rational rather than a statistical basis, to see if we obtain a more homogeneous set of factors in this way.

Summary

The perceived costs of combining a career and motherhood may play a vital role in the individual's decision about her educational and vocational goals. There are several factors that may influence how the individual sees the effects of such role combination. These factors include her own marital and parental status and her experience of having been a child of a working (or nonworking) mother. Both of these factors make the experience of issues involved in parenting more realistic. Once one has been a parent and has experienced first-hand the responsibilities and issues involved in this role, one may greatly alter her view of how working would affect her role as a mother. In making plans for one's life before actually becoming a parent, one may need to rely more on personal experiences. If you grew up in a home in which your mother worked, especially when children were young, you may have a better idea of what is entailed in this option.

You may have a clear view of the advantages (feeling more independent, utilizing education, having children see mothers as more competent) and the costs (less leisure time, less time to play with children and to observe their development). A further suggestion from the obtained findings is that the importance of the father who is supportive is recognized.

An indication that this experiential factor is relevant is suggested when we see that there are few differences in the values of the groups and that differences emerge when parameters from personal history are considered.We have said little about the woman whose mother may not have worked and who was unhappy with this situation. The perceived costs of combining roles may be viewed differently from this position and the relevant needs evaluated from a different perspective. A wide range of variables are clearly essential to consider in understanding role decisions and in making them responsibly.